

## FACT SHEET NATIONWIDE PERMIT 31

**MAINTENANCE OF EXISTING FLOOD CONTROL FACILITIES:** Discharges of dredged or fill material for the maintenance of existing flood control facilities, including debris basins, retention/detention basins, and channels that were (i) previously authorized by the Corps by individual permit, general permit, or by 33 CFR 330.3 and constructed or (ii) constructed by the Corps and transferred to a local sponsor for operation and maintenance. The maintenance is limited to that approved in a maintenance baseline determination made by the District Engineer (DE). The prospective permittee will provide the DE with sufficient evidence for the DE to determine the approved and constructed baseline.

All dredged material must be placed in an upland site or a currently authorized disposal site in waters of the United States, and proper siltation controls must be used. This NWP does not authorize the removal of sediment and associated vegetation from natural water courses. (Activities that involve only the cutting and removing of vegetation above the ground, e.g., mowing, rotary cutting, and chainsawing, where the activity neither substantially disturbs the root system nor involves mechanized pushing, dragging, or other similar activities that redeposit excavated soil material, does not require a Section 404 permit in accordance with 33 CFR 323.2(d)(2)(ii)). Only constructed channels within stretches of natural rivers that have been previously authorized as part of a flood control facility could be authorized for maintenance under this NWP.

**Maintenance Baseline:** Upon receipt of sufficient evidence, the DE will determine the maintenance baseline. The maintenance baseline is the existing flood control project that the DE has determined can be maintained under this NWP, subject to any case-specific conditions required by the DE. In determining the maintenance baseline, the DE will consider the following factors: The approved facility, the actual constructed facility, the Corps constructed project that was transferred, the maintenance history, if the facility has been functioning at a reduced capacity and for how long, present vs. original flood control needs, and if sensitive/unique functions and values may be adversely affected. Revocation or modification of the final determination of the maintenance baseline can only be done in accordance with 33 CFR 330.5. This NWP can not be used until the DE determines the maintenance baseline and the need for mitigation and any regional or activity-specific conditions. The maintenance baseline will only be determined once and will remain valid for any subsequent reissuance of this NWP. However, if the project is effectively abandoned or reduced due to lack of proper maintenance, a new determination of a maintenance baseline would be required before this NWP could be used for subsequent maintenance.

**Mitigation:** In determining the need for mitigation, the DE will consider the following factors: Any original mitigation required, the current environmental setting, and any adverse effects of the maintenance project that were not mitigated in the original construction. The DE will not delay needed maintenance for completion of any required mitigation, provided that the DE and the applicant establish a schedule for the identification, approval, development, construction and completion of such required mitigation. (Sections 10 and 404)

**General Conditions:** The following general conditions must be followed in order for any authorization by a NWP to be valid:

- 1. Navigation:** No activity may cause more than a minimal adverse effect on navigation.
- 2. Proper Maintenance:** Any structure or fill authorized shall be properly maintained, including maintenance to ensure public safety.
- 3. Soil Erosion and Sediment Controls:** Appropriate soil erosion and sediment controls must be used and maintained in effective operating condition during construction, and all exposed soil and other

fills, as well as any work below the ordinary high water mark or high tide line, must be permanently stabilized at the earliest practicable date.

**4. Aquatic Life Movements:** No activity may substantially disrupt the movement of those species of aquatic life indigenous to the waterbody, including those species which normally migrate through the area, unless the activity's primary purpose is to impound water. Culverts placed in streams must be installed to maintain low flow conditions.

**5. Equipment:** Heavy equipment working in wetlands must be placed on mats, or other measures must be taken to minimize soil disturbance.

**6. Regional and Case-By-Case Conditions:** The activity must comply with any regional conditions which may have been added by the division engineer (see 33 CFR 330.4(e)) and with any case specific conditions added by the Corps or by the State or tribe in its Section 401 water quality certification.

**7. Wild and Scenic Rivers:** No activity may occur in a component of the National Wild and Scenic River System; or in a river officially designated by Congress as a "study river" for possible inclusion in the system, while the river is in an official study status; unless the appropriate Federal agency, with direct management responsibility for such river, has determined in writing that the proposed activity will not adversely affect the Wild and Scenic River designation, or study status. Information on Wild and Scenic Rivers may be obtained from the appropriate Federal land management agency in the area (e.g., National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service).

**8. Tribal Rights:** No activity or its operation may impair reserved tribal rights, including, but not limited to, reserved water rights and treaty fishing and hunting rights.

**9. Water Quality:** In certain States and tribal lands an individual 401 water quality certification must be obtained or waived (see 33 CFR 330.4(c)).

**10. Coast Zone Management:** *Not applicable.*

**11. Endangered Species:** (a) No activity is authorized which is likely to jeopardize the continued existence of a threatened or endangered species or a species proposed for such designation, as identified under the Federal Endangered Species Act, or which will destroy or adversely modify the critical habitat of such species. Non-federal permittees shall notify the District Engineer if any listed species or designated critical habitat might be affected or is in the vicinity of the project, or is located in the designated critical habitat and shall not begin work on the activity until notified by the District Engineer that the requirements of the Endangered Species Act have been satisfied and that the activity is authorized. For activities that may affect Federally-listed endangered or threatened species or designated critical habitat, the notification must include the name(s) of the endangered or threatened species that may be affected by the proposed work or that utilize the designated critical habitat that may be affected by the proposed work. As a result of formal or informal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) or the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), the District Engineer may add species-specific regional endangered species conditions to the NWP.

(b) Authorization of any activity by a NWP does not authorize the "take" of a threatened or endangered species as defined under the Federal Endangered Species Act. In the absence of separate authorization (e.g., an ESA Section 10 Permit, a Biological Opinion with "incidental take" provisions, etc.) from the FWS or the NMFS, both lethal and non-lethal "takes" of protected species are in violation

of the Endangered Species Act. Information on the location of threatened and endangered species and their critical habitat can be obtained directly from the offices of the FWS and NMFS or their world wide web pages at <http://www.fws.gov/r9endspp/endspp.html> and [http://www.nfms.gov/prot\\_res/esahome.html](http://www.nfms.gov/prot_res/esahome.html) respectively.

**12. Historic Properties:** No activity which may affect historic properties listed, or eligible for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places is authorized, until the District Engineer has complied with the provisions of 33 CFR Part 325, Appendix C. The prospective permittee must notify the District Engineer if the authorized activity may affect any historic properties listed, determined to be eligible, or which the prospective permittee has reason to believe may be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, and shall not begin the activity until notified by the District Engineer that the requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act have been satisfied and that the activity is authorized. Information on the location and existence of historic resources can be obtained from the State Historic Preservation Office and the National Register of Historic Places (see 33 CFR 330.4(g)). For activities that may affect historic properties listed in, or eligible for listing in, the National Register of Historic Places, the notification must state which historic property may be affected by the proposed work or include a vicinity map indicating the location of the historic property.

**13. Notification:** *See attached sheets.*

**14. Compliance Certification:** Every permittee who has received a NWP verification from the Corps will submit a signed certification regarding the completed work and any required mitigation. The certification will be forwarded by the Corps with the authorization letter. The certification will include: (a) A statement that the authorized work was done in accordance with the Corps authorization, including any general or specific conditions; (b) A statement that any required mitigation was completed in accordance with the permit conditions; and (c) The signature of the permittee certifying the completion of the work and mitigation.

**15. Use of Multiple Nationwide Permits:** The use of more than one NWP for a single and complete project is prohibited, except when the acreage loss of waters of the United States authorized by the NWPs does not exceed the acreage limit of the NWP with the highest specified acreage limit. For example, if a road crossing over tidal waters is constructed under NWP 14, with associated bank stabilization authorized by NWP 13, the maximum acreage loss of waters of the United States for the total project cannot exceed 1/3 acre.

**16. Water Supply Intakes:** No activity, including structures and work in navigable waters of the United States or discharges of dredged or fill material, may occur in the proximity of a public water supply intake except where the activity is for repair of the public water supply intake structures or adjacent bank stabilization.

**17. Shellfish Beds:** No activity, including structures and work in navigable waters of the United States or discharges of dredged or fill material, may occur in areas of concentrated shellfish populations, unless the activity is directly related to a shellfish harvesting activity authorized by NWP 4.

**18. Suitable Material:** No activity, including structures and work in navigable waters of the United States or discharges of dredged or fill material, may consist of unsuitable material (e.g., trash, debris, car bodies, asphalt, etc.) and material used for construction or discharged must be free from toxic pollutants in toxic amounts (see Section 307 of the Clean Water Act).

**19. Mitigation:** The project must be designed and constructed to avoid and minimize adverse effects to waters of the United States to the maximum extent practicable at the project site (i.e., on site).

Mitigation will be required when necessary to ensure that the adverse effects to the aquatic environment are minimal.

**20. Spawning Areas:** Activities, including structures and work in navigable waters of the United States or discharges of dredged or fill material, in spawning areas during spawning seasons must be avoided to the maximum extent practicable. Activities that result in the physical destruction (e.g., excavate, fill, or smother downstream by substantial turbidity) of an important spawning area are not authorized.

**21. Management of Water Flows:** To the maximum extent practicable, the activity must be designed to maintain preconstruction downstream flow conditions (e.g., location, capacity, and flow rates). Furthermore, the activity must not permanently restrict or impede the passage of normal or expected high flows (unless the primary purpose of the fill is to impound waters) and the structure or discharge of dredged or fill material must withstand expected high flows. The activity must, to the maximum extent practicable, provide for retaining excess flows from the site, provide for maintaining surface flow rates from the site similar to preconstruction conditions, and must not increase water flows from the project site, relocate water, or redirect water flow beyond preconstruction conditions. In addition, the activity must, to the maximum extent practicable, reduce adverse effects such as flooding or erosion downstream and upstream of the project site, unless the activity is part of a larger system designed to manage water flows.

**22. Adverse Effects From Impoundments:** If the activity, including structures and work in navigable waters of the United States or discharge of dredged or fill material, creates an impoundment of water, adverse effects on the aquatic system caused by the accelerated passage of water and/or the restriction of its flow shall be minimized to the maximum extent practicable.

**23. Waterfowl Breeding Areas:** Activities, including structures and work in navigable waters of the United States or discharges of dredged or fill material, into breeding areas for migratory waterfowl must be avoided to the maximum extent practicable.

**24. Removal of Temporary Fills:** Any temporary fills must be removed in their entirety and the affected areas returned to their preexisting elevation.

**25. Designated Critical Resources Waters:** Critical resource waters include, NOAA-designated marine sanctuaries, National Estuarine Research Reserves, National Wild and Scenic Rivers, critical habitat for Federally listed threatened and endangered species, coral reefs, State natural heritage sites, and outstanding national resource waters or other waters officially designated by a State as having particular environmental or ecological significance and identified by the District Engineer after notice and opportunity for public comment. The District Engineer may also designate additional critical resource waters after notice and opportunity for comment.

(a) Except as noted below, discharges of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States are not authorized by NWP 31 for any activity within, or directly affecting, critical resource waters, including wetlands adjacent to such waters. Discharges of dredged or fill materials into waters of the United States may be authorized in National Wild and Scenic Rivers if the activity complies with General Condition 7. Further, such discharges may be authorized in designated critical habitat for Federally listed threatened or endangered species if the activity complies with General Condition 11 and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the National Marine Fisheries Service has concurred in a determination of compliance with this condition.

**Further Information:**

1. District Engineers have authority to determine if any activity complies with the terms and conditions of a NWP.

2. NWPs do not obviate the need to obtain other Federal, State, or local permits, approvals, or authorizations required by law.

3. NWPs do not grant any property rights or exclusive privileges.

4. NWPs do not authorize any injury to the property or rights of others.

5. NWPs do not authorize interference with any existing or proposed Federal project.

### **General Condition 13. Notification:**

(a) Timing: Where required by the terms of the NWP, the prospective permittee must notify the District Engineer with a preconstruction notification (PCN) as early as possible. The District Engineer must determine if the PCN is complete within 30 days of the date of receipt and can request the additional information necessary to make the PCN complete only once. However, if the prospective permittee does not provide all of the requested information, then the District Engineer will notify the prospective permittee that the PCN is still incomplete and the PCN review process will not commence until all of the requested information has been received by the District Engineer. The prospective permittee shall not begin the activity:

(1) Until notified in writing by the District Engineer that the activity may proceed under the NWP with any special conditions imposed by the District or Division Engineer; or

(2) If notified in writing by the District or Division Engineer that an individual permit is required; or

(3) Unless 45 days have passed from the District Engineer's receipt of the complete notification and the prospective permittee has not received written notice from the District or Division Engineer. Subsequently, the permittee's right to proceed under the NWP may be modified, suspended, or revoked only in accordance with procedure set forth in 33 CFR 330.5(d)(2).

(b) Contents of Notification: The notification must be in writing and include the following information:

(1) Name, address, and telephone numbers of the prospective permittee;

(2) Location of the proposed project;

(3) Brief description of the proposed project; the project's purpose; direct and indirect adverse environmental effects the project would cause; any other NWP(s), regional general permit(s), or individual permit(s) used or intended to be used to authorize any part of the proposed project or any related activity; and

(4) thru (9) **Not applicable to NWP 31.**

(10) For NWP 31 the prospective permittee must either notify the District Engineer with a PCN prior to each maintenance activity or submit a five year (or less) maintenance plan. In addition, the PCN must include all of the following:

(i) Sufficient baseline information so as to identify the approved channel depths and configurations and existing facilities. Minor deviations are authorized, provided the approved flood control protection or drainage is not increased;

(ii) A delineation of any affected special aquatic sites, including wetlands; and,

(iii) Location of the dredged material disposal site.

(11) thru (16) **Not applicable to NWP 31.**

(17) For activities that may adversely affect Federally-listed endangered or threatened species, the PCN must include the name(s) of those endangered or threatened species that may be affected by the proposed work or utilize the designated critical habitat that may be affected by the proposed work.

(18) For activities that may affect historic properties listed in, or eligible for listing in, the National Register of Historic Places, the PCN must state which historic property may be affected by the proposed work or include a vicinity map indicating the location of the historic property.

(19) **Not applicable to NWP 31.**

(c) Form of Notification: The standard individual permit application form (Form ENG 4345) may be used as the notification but must clearly indicate that it is a PCN and must include all of the information required in (b)(1)-(19) of General Condition 13. A letter containing the requisite information may also be used.

(d) District Engineer's Decision: In reviewing the PCN for the proposed activity, the District Engineer will determine whether the activity authorized by the NWP will result in more than minimal individual or cumulative adverse environmental effects or may be contrary to the public interest.

The prospective permittee may, optionally, submit a proposed mitigation plan with the PCN to expedite the process and the District Engineer will consider any proposed compensatory mitigation the applicant has included in the proposal in determining whether the net adverse environmental effects to the aquatic environment of the proposed work are minimal. If the District Engineer determines that the activity complies with the terms and conditions of the NWP and that the adverse effects on the aquatic environment are minimal, the District Engineer will notify the permittee and include any conditions the District Engineer deems necessary.

Any compensatory mitigation proposal must be approved by the District Engineer prior to commencing work. If the prospective permittee is required to submit a compensatory mitigation proposal with the PCN, the proposal may be either conceptual or detailed. If the prospective permittee elects to submit a compensatory mitigation plan with the PCN, the District Engineer will expeditiously review the proposed compensatory mitigation plan. The District Engineer must review the plan within 45 days of receiving a complete PCN and determine whether the conceptual or specific proposed mitigation would ensure no more than minimal adverse effects on the aquatic environment. If the net adverse effects of the project on the aquatic environment (after consideration of the compensatory mitigation proposal) are determined by the District Engineer to be minimal, the District Engineer will provide a timely written response to the applicant stating that the project can proceed under the terms and conditions of the NWP.

If the District Engineer determines that the adverse effects of the proposed work are more than minimal, then he will notify the applicant either: (1) That the project does not qualify for authorization under the NWP and instruct the applicant on the procedures to seek authorization under an individual permit; (2) that the project is authorized under the NWP subject to the applicant's submission of a mitigation proposal that would reduce the adverse effects on the aquatic environment to the minimal level; or (3) that the project is authorized under the NWP with specific modifications or conditions. Where the District Engineer determines that mitigation is required in order to ensure no more than minimal adverse effects on the aquatic environment, the activity will be authorized within the 45-day PCN period, including the necessary conceptual or specific mitigation or a requirement that the applicant submit a mitigation proposal that would reduce the adverse effects on the aquatic environment to the minimal level. When conceptual mitigation is included, or a mitigation plan is required under item (2) above, no work in waters of the United States will occur until the District Engineer has approved a specific mitigation plan.

(e) Agency Coordination: The District Engineer will consider any comments from Federal and State agencies concerning the proposed activity's compliance with the terms and conditions of the NWPs and the need for mitigation to reduce the project's adverse effects on the aquatic environment to a minimal level.

For activities requiring notification to the District Engineer that result in the loss of greater than 1/2 acre of waters of the United States, the District Engineer will, upon receipt of a notification, provide immediately (e.g., via facsimile transmission, overnight mail, or other expeditious manner), a copy to the appropriate offices of the Fish and Wildlife Service, State natural resource or water quality agency, EPA, and State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). These agencies will then have 10 calendar days from the date the material is transmitted to telephone or fax the District Engineer notice that they intend to provide substantive, site-specific comments. If so contacted by an agency, the District Engineer will wait an additional 15 calendar days before making a decision on the notification. The District Engineer will fully consider agency comments received within the specified time frame, but will provide no response to the resource agency. The District Engineer will indicate in the administrative record associated with each notification that the resource agencies' concerns were considered. Applicants are encouraged to provide the Corps multiple copies of notifications to expedite agency notification.

(f) Wetlands Delineations: Wetlands delineations must be prepared in accordance with the current method required by the Corps. The permittee may ask the Corps to delineate the special aquatic site. There may be some delay if the Corps does the delineation. Furthermore, the 45-day period will not start until the wetland delineation has been completed and submitted to the Corps, where appropriate.